

AZ JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

*Holding the Gavel
Without Holding
the Stress*



Holding the Gavel without Holding the Stress!

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Objectives

Increase awareness of personal wellness needs and develop effective strategies to address burnout and maintain functioning in high-pressure environments.

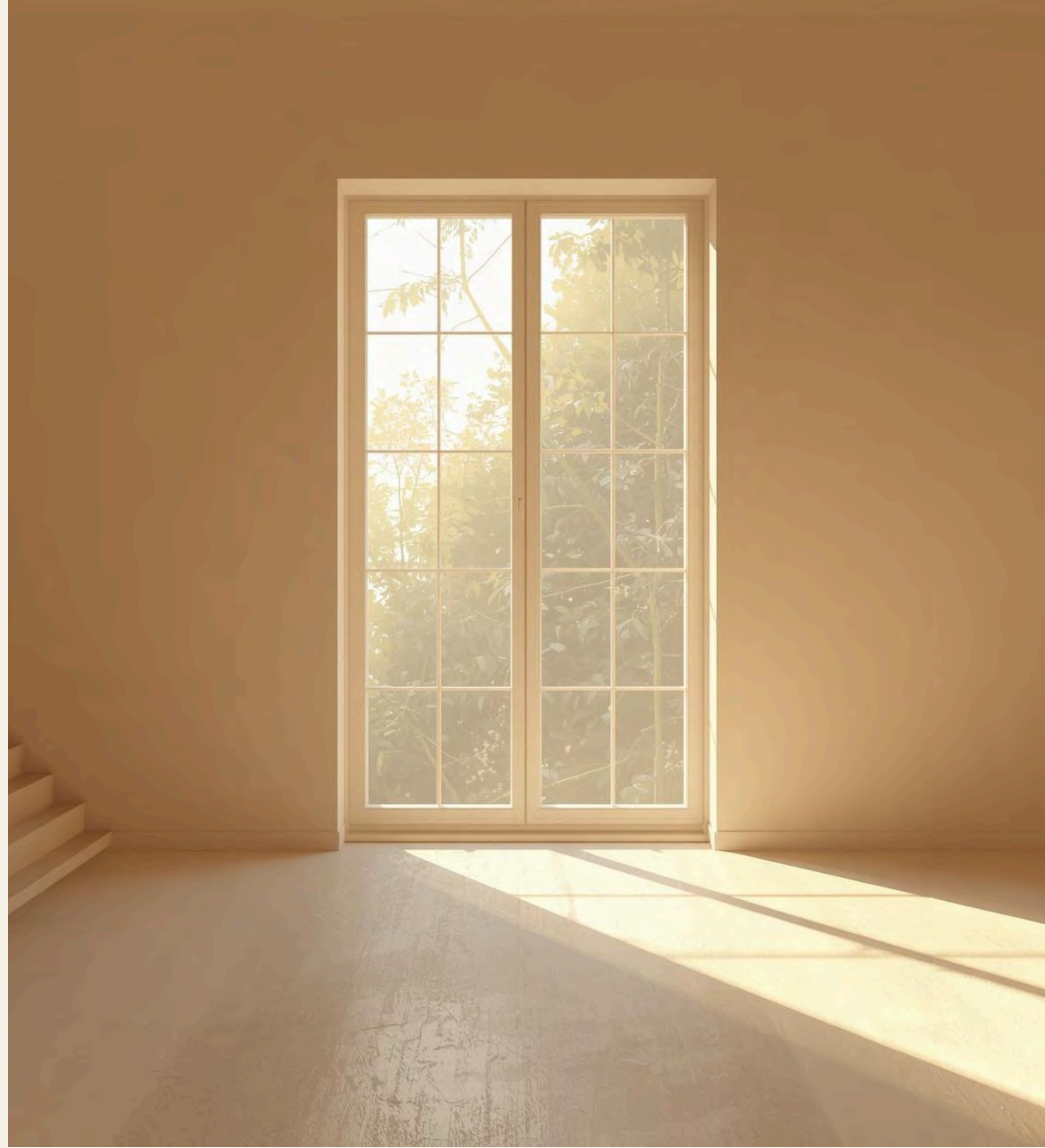
Highlighting the subtle, high-functioning signs of burnout & learning wellness tools



Understanding the Concept of Burnout

Burnout is a state of chronic **physical and emotional exhaustion** resulting from prolonged stress. It affects **individual well-being** and productivity, often leaving those in high-responsibility roles feeling overwhelmed and ineffective.

Burnout is a condition that reflects prolonged stress and **depletion across multiple areas of wellness**, including emotional, mental, and physical health.

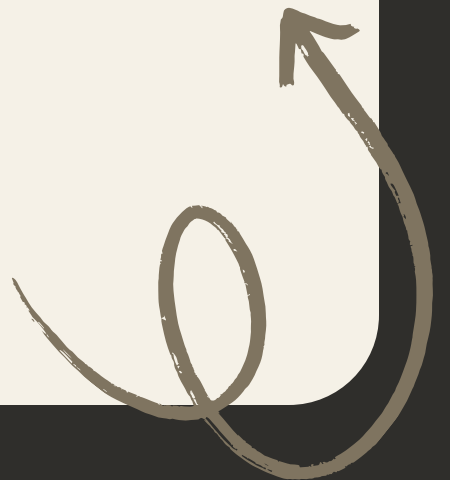


Understanding Burnout

High responsibility ≠ High support

Emotional suppression is expected

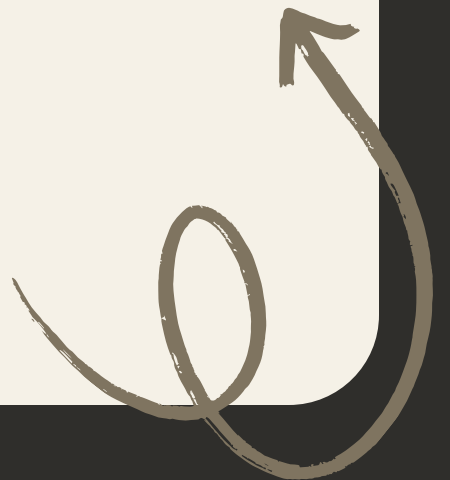
Burnout is overload—not weakness



Understanding Burnout

Burnout is not simply exhaustion

It is prolonged depletion without adequate restoration.



GAME TIME:

The Stress or Burnout Game

Determine whether the statistic or symptom reflects:

Normal Stress

A **temporary** response to a challenge or demand that resolves once the situation passes.

Chronic Stress

Ongoing stress that **persists over time** without adequate recovery or relief.

Burnout

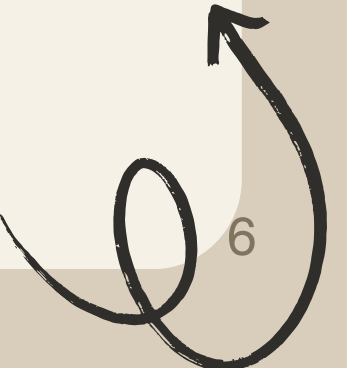
A state of **emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion** caused by prolonged, unmanaged stress.

Compassion Fatigue

Emotional and physical exhaustion from **repeated exposure to others' stress, trauma, or suffering.**

Decision Fatigue

Mental exhaustion that **reduces the ability to make clear, effective decisions** after prolonged decision-making.



Difficulty concentrating after making high-stakes decisions all day

Answer: Decision Fatigue

Fun Fact: Studies have shown that decision quality can decline throughout the day as mental energy decreases—this is called decision fatigue.

Decision fatigue is why choosing what to eat for dinner can feel harder than making major decisions earlier in the day.



Increased focus and alertness when preparing for an important case or ruling

Answer: Normal Stress

Fun Fact: Short-term stress can actually enhance performance and focus when it is not prolonged.



63% more likely to take sick days.

Answer: Burnout

Fun Fact: Burnout impacts physical health, emotional regulation, and workplace functioning.



Feeling emotionally numb after
repeated exposure to conflict.

Answer: Compassion Fatigue

Fun Fact: Helping professionals and judicial professionals can absorb emotional residue from repeated exposure to stress and trauma.



Working longer hours but feeling less
productive.

Answer: Chronic Stress / Burnout

Fun Fact: Overworking is often normalized in leadership roles, but prolonged overwork decreases effectiveness.



Feeling nervous before a high-stakes hearing,
but returning to baseline afterward.

Answer: Normal Stress

Fun Fact: Stress that is temporary and resolves after the situation is a normal, healthy response.



Irritability, sleep disruption,
headaches, and emotional shutdown.

Answer: Burnout

Fun Fact: Burnout affects the nervous system, cognition, mood, and physical health.



Feeling drained after repeated exposure to emotionally intense or traumatic cases.

Answer: Compassion Fatigue

Fun Fact: Compassion fatigue comes from absorbing the emotional weight of others over time.



Feeling detached from work and questioning whether your efforts even matter.

Answer: Burnout

Fun Fact: A reduced sense of accomplishment is a key component of burnout.



Becoming more impulsive or avoidant when making decisions later in the day.

Answer: Decision Fatigue

Fun Fact: Your brain has a limited amount of decision-making energy each day—once it's depleted, even simple choices can feel overwhelming.



Trouble sleeping and persistent tension due to ongoing workload pressure.

Answer: Chronic Stress

Fun Fact: When stress becomes ongoing, it begins to impact the body and nervous system.



Going through the motions at work but feeling emotionally exhausted and unmotivated

Answer: Burnout

Fun Fact: Burnout often includes emotional exhaustion and loss of engagement.



Becoming less empathetic or more
desensitized to people's suffering

Answer: Compassion Fatigue

Fun Fact: This is a protective response when emotional capacity becomes overwhelmed.



Struggling to make simple decisions after a full day of high-level decision-making

Answer: Decision Fatigue

Fun Fact: The brain becomes depleted after sustained decision-making, even for smaller choices.



Consistently feeling overwhelmed week after week with little time to recover.

Answer: Chronic Stress

Fun Fact: Chronic stress occurs when demands are constant and recovery is limited.



Bonus Questions 1

Feeling physically present but mentally checked out during interactions.

Answer: Burnout or Compassion Fatigue

Fun Fact: Becoming more impulsive or avoidant when making decisions later in the day.



Just because it looks productive
doesn't mean it's healthy.



Bonus Questions 2

Using work to avoid dealing with emotions or personal stress.

Answer: Chronic Stress/Burnout Overlap

Fun Fact: High-performing professionals are especially vulnerable because productivity is often rewarded—even when it's driven by avoidance.

This is often a sign of emotional depletion or nervous system overload.

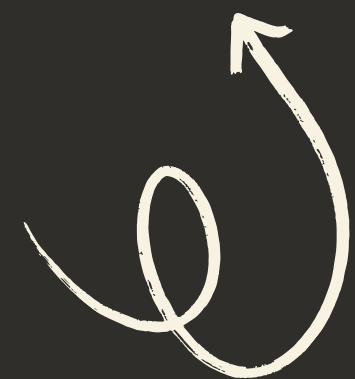
When capacity is exceeded, the brain protects itself by disengaging.

In burnout, this can look like detachment or loss of engagement.

This isn't a lack of care—it's often a signal that emotional reserves are depleted.

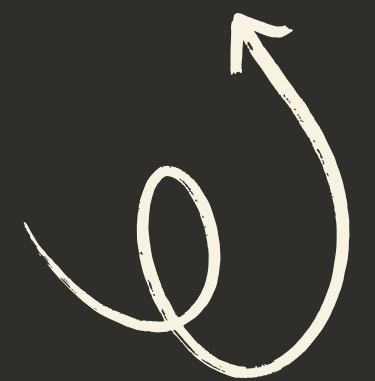


Disconnection is not dysfunction
—it's often a signal of overload.



These are the kinds of signs that don't always get flagged—especially in leadership roles—because people are still functioning.

But functioning is not the same as being well



Notice how some of these overlap.
That's intentional.
Stress doesn't always show up neatly
labeled—
and high-performing professionals
often function through it until it
becomes burnout.



Symptoms of Burnout

Recognizing key indicators of burnout

Exhaustion

Exhaustion manifests as a profound **loss of energy**, making even simple tasks feel overwhelming. This physical and mental depletion hinders productivity and affects overall well-being.

Cynicism

Cynicism often arises from chronic stress, leading to a **detached** and negative outlook towards work and colleagues, which can further exacerbate feelings of isolation and disconnection.

Inefficacy

Inefficacy is characterized by a **feeling of incompetence** and lack of accomplishment in one's role, undermining confidence and motivation, which perpetuates the cycle of burnout.



Symptoms of Burnout

Recognizing key indicators of burnout

Irritability

Irritability is a state of heightened sensitivity where a person becomes easily annoyed, frustrated, or angered—often in response to situations that wouldn't normally provoke such a strong reaction.

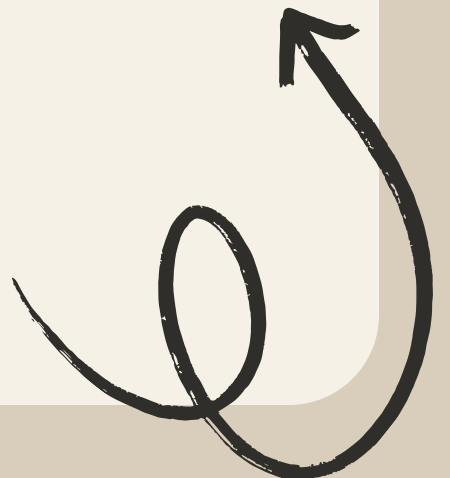
Decision fatigue

Decision fatigue is the mental exhaustion that builds up after making many decisions, reducing your ability to think clearly, weigh options, and choose effectively.

Emotional shutdown

Emotional shutdown is a protective response where your mind and body reduce or “numb out” emotional experience in order to cope with overwhelm, stress, or prolonged pressure.

Work follows you home



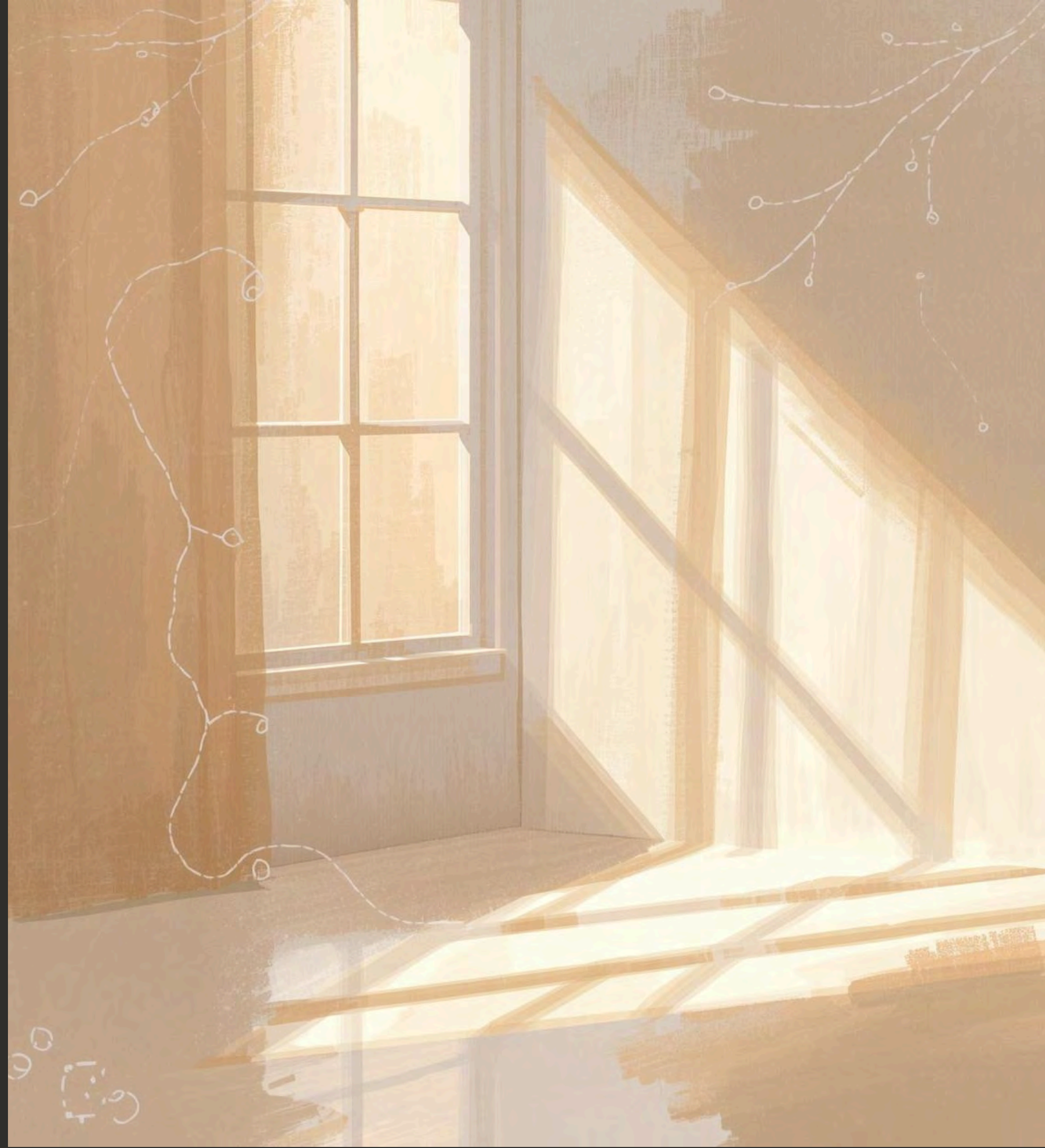
Nervous System Regulation

Your body is always asking: 🙋 Am I safe or not?



Understanding Nervous System Regulation

Nervous system regulation is crucial for managing stress and achieving balance. By **recognizing our body's responses**, we can implement techniques to foster calmness and resilience in high-responsibility roles.



Nervous System Regulation

Fight → Irritability/Control

Flight → Overworking

Freeze → Shutdown

Fawn → People Pleasing/ Over Accomodating



Judges are expected to remain composed while routinely exposed to conflict, trauma, pressure, and scrutiny.



The Hidden Costs of Burnout & Holding the Stress.



Chronic Stress & Health

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- anxiety
- depression
- weakened immune functioning
- gastrointestinal issues
- sleep disorders
- According to the American Psychological Association, prolonged stress can significantly impact both physical and emotional health.
- The World Health Organization officially recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon associated with chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.



Workplace Burnout

- 63% more likely to take a sick day
- 2.6 times more likely to seek another job
- significantly more likely to experience depression and anxiety symptoms
- 23% more likely to visit the emergency room
- more likely to report lower confidence in performance



Impact of Stress

- ↓ Clarity
- ↓ Patience
- ↓ Energy
- ↑ Irritability



High-performing professionals
often normalize stress until
functioning begins to decline.



The High Performer Trap

Carry more

Delay self

Say yes



Hidden Cost

“You are functioning... but depleted.”



“You cannot think your way out of burnout. You must regulate your way out.”



Regulation Techniques

Strategies for Emotional Resilience

Breathwork

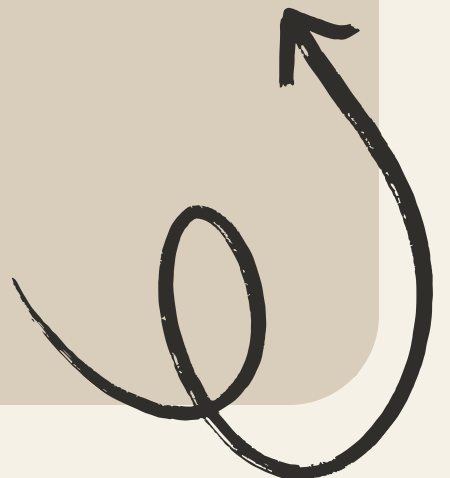
Breathwork techniques help to **calm the mind** and regulate emotions. By focusing on the breath, individuals can lower stress levels and promote a sense of peace and clarity.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness encourages present-moment awareness, allowing for a deeper understanding of emotions. Practicing mindfulness can cultivate resilience, enhance focus, and foster a compassionate mindset toward oneself and others.

Grounding

Grounding exercises facilitate reconnection with the body and environment. These techniques empower individuals to stabilize emotions, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of safety and balance in daily life.





The Calm Place Exercise

Where is your Calm Place?



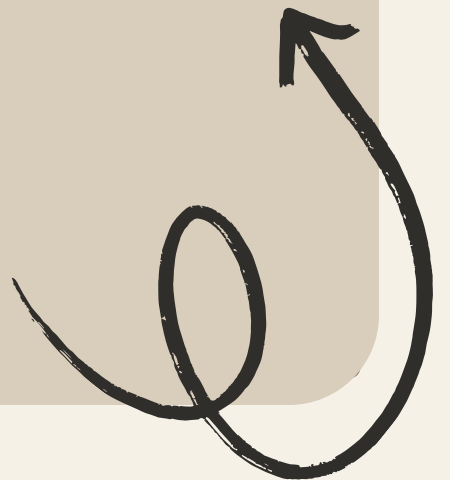
The Container Exercise

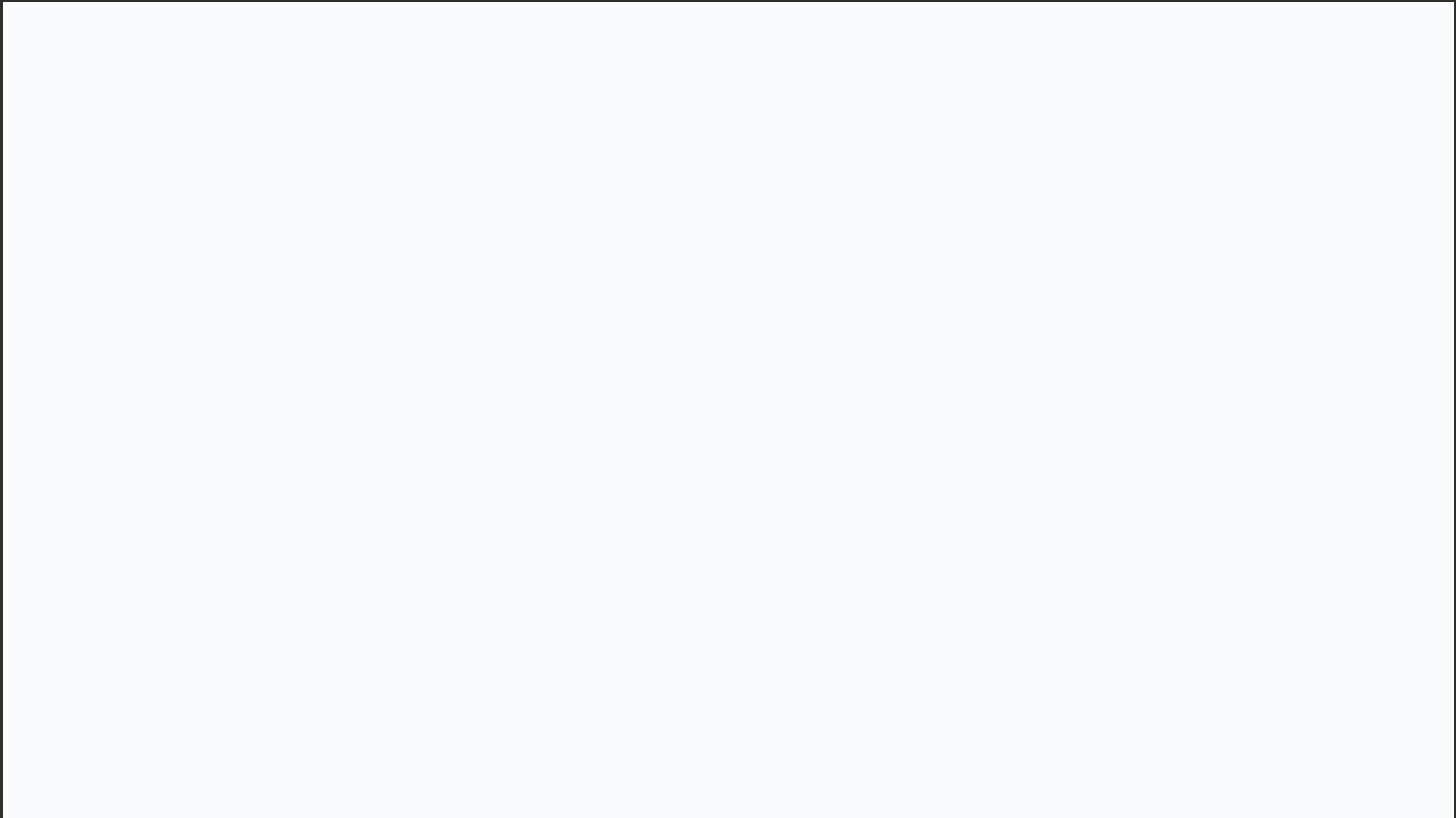
Where does your stress go?





What are you carrying that isn't yours?





Unique Stressors in Leadership

Leadership roles often involve **intense pressure** and responsibility, leading to increased stress. Understanding these unique stressors is essential for maintaining balance and fostering resilience in high-responsibility positions.



The Weight of the robe

76%

of judges reported not having enough time for optimal physical and mental health.

92%

of judges surveyed stated excessive workloads create constant stress that contributes to burnout.

Nearly 4 out of 10 judges reported moderate to high psychological distress in a large judicial wellbeing study

More than 1 out of 3 judges showed trauma symptom levels high enough to warrant PTSD assessment.

Over half of judges surveyed reported that public attacks and hostility toward the judiciary negatively impacted their mental health.

More than half of judges who received threats said the threats impacted how they worked and felt about safety.



The Leadership Load

High-stakes decisions

Trauma exposure

No processing space



Leading with Capacity

Cultivating Self-Awareness and Empathy

Self-Awareness

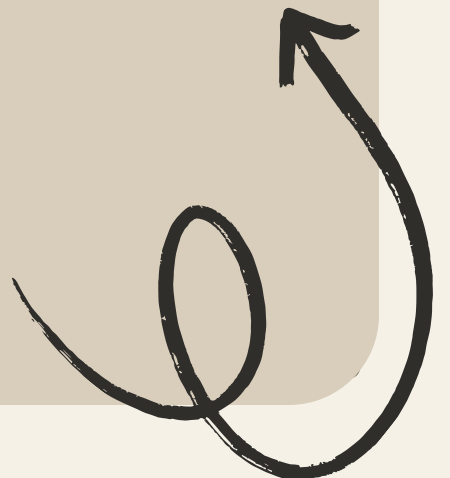
Developing **self-awareness** allows leaders to recognize their emotions and triggers, enhancing decision-making and fostering healthier interactions with colleagues and teams for improved workplace dynamics.

Empathy

Practicing **empathy** enables leaders to connect deeply with their team's experiences. This connection fosters trust, collaboration, and a supportive environment, crucial for maintaining balance in high-responsibility roles.

Boundary Setting

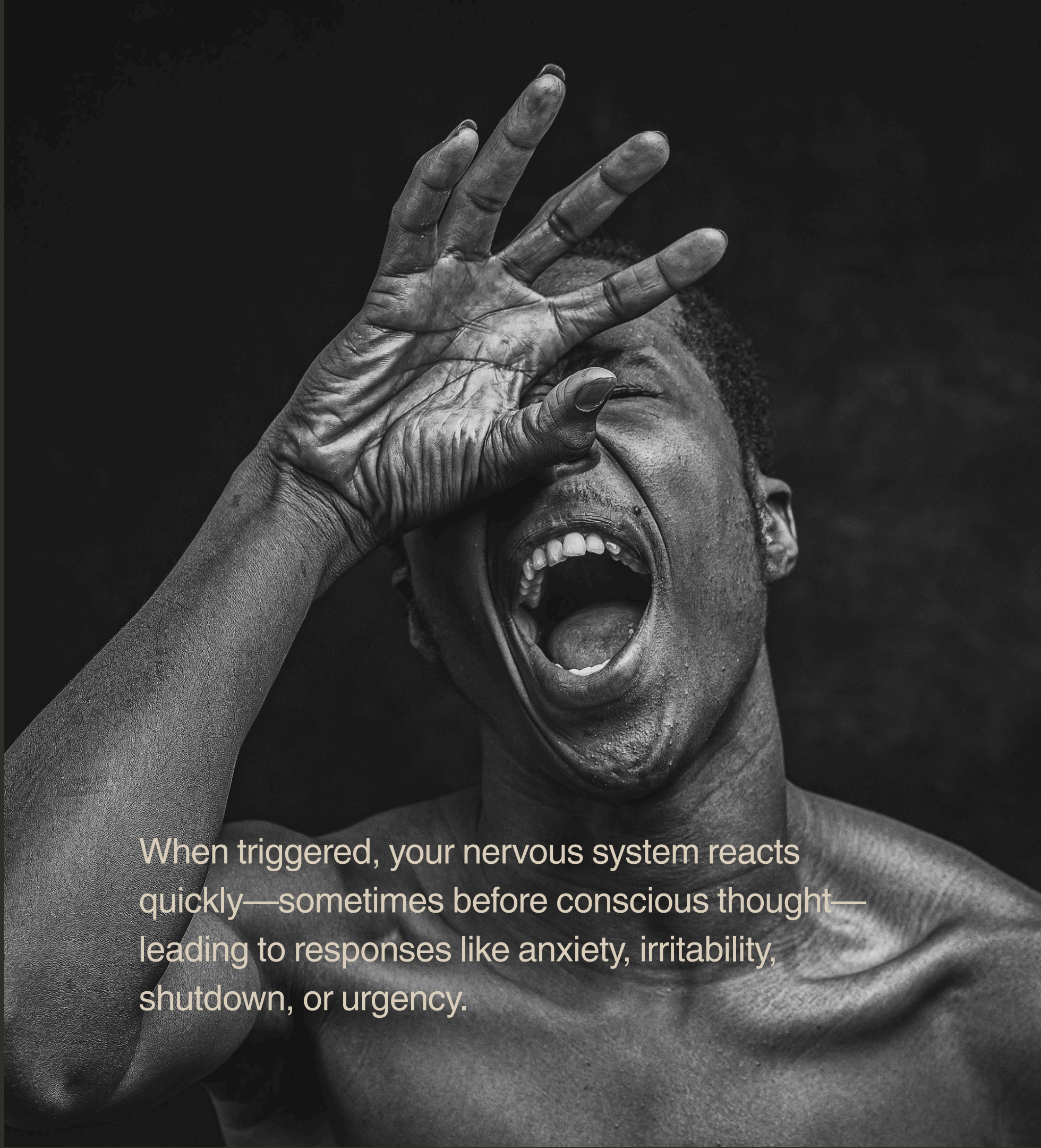
Establishing **boundaries** is essential for leaders to protect their mental health and capacity. Clear boundaries promote respect and understanding, ensuring both personal well-being and team effectiveness are prioritized.



Guided Reflection on Triggers

Triggers are cues—internal or external—that automatically activate an emotional or stress response, often without conscious control.

Take a moment to explore your **personal triggers** in a tranquil space. Identifying these will help you cultivate awareness, allowing for healthier responses and creating a path toward balance and well-being.

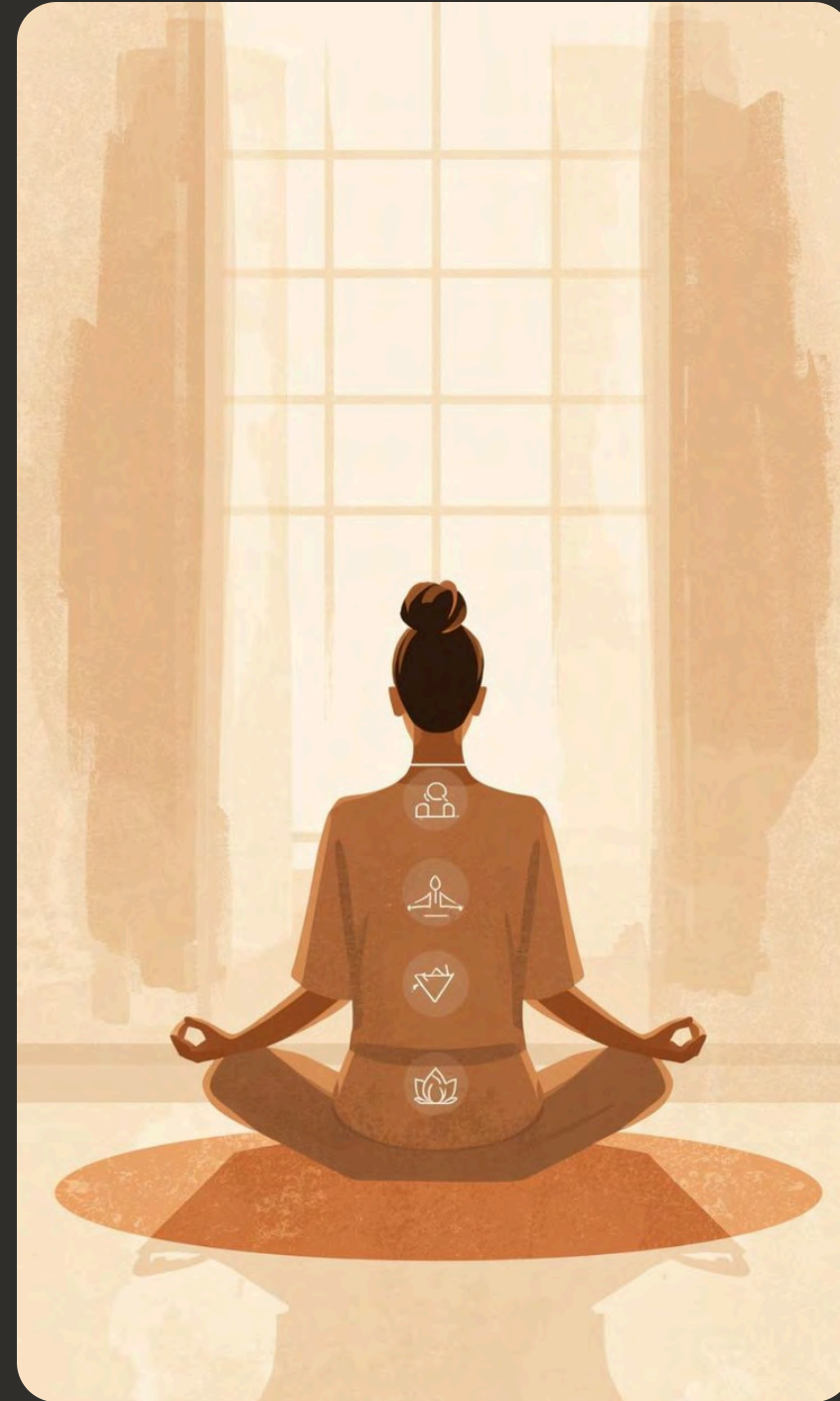


When triggered, your nervous system reacts quickly—sometimes before conscious thought—leading to responses like anxiety, irritability, shutdown, or urgency.





Building Resilience: Strategies for Individuals and Teams



Personal

Fostering individual resilience through self-care practices.



Team

Cultivating a supportive environment for team resilience.

Coping vs Regulation

Coping → Temporary
Regulation → Reset



Coping Skills

Sensory Invoking Coping Skills

Based on the 6 Senses

TOUCH . TASTE. SMELL. SIGHT. SOUND. MOVEMENT



Tool: Grounding

Slow breath

5 things you see

Feet planted



Tool: Sensory Reset

Cold water

Deep pressure

Movement





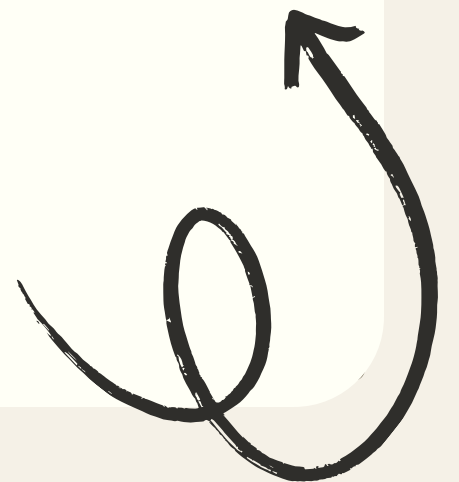
Tool #3 STOP Model

Stop

Breathe

Observe

Proceed





Boundaries

**Boundaries = Protection
(not punishment)**



Types of Boundaries

Time

protects your time



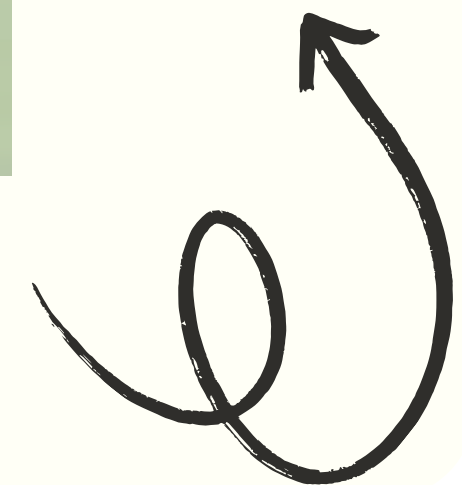
Emotional

protects your heart



Mental

protects your mind



Time Boundaries



What Time Boundaries Sound Like

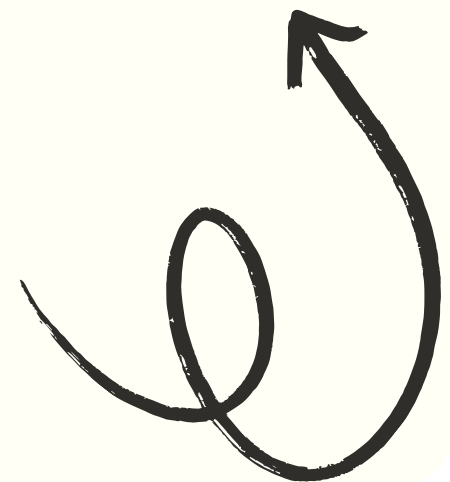
- “I’m not available at that time.”
- “I can meet between 12–2, not outside of that.”
- “I need to end on time today.”
- “I don’t have the capacity to take that on right now.”
- “Let’s schedule this instead of discussing it right now.”

What They Protect

- Your schedule
- Your energy throughout the day
- Your ability to rest and reset
- Your work-life separation

👉 Time boundaries are about:

“Just because I can doesn’t mean I will.”



Emotional Boundaries



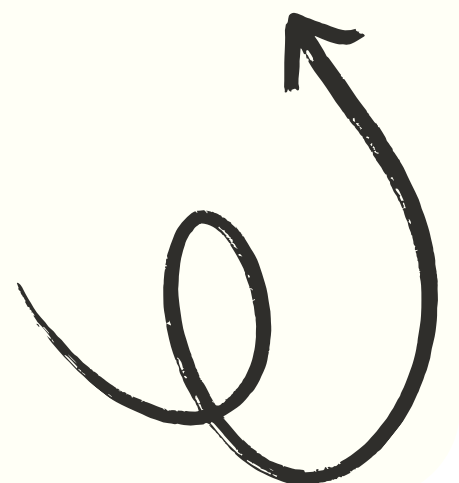
What they sound like:

- “I care about you, but I can’t carry this for you.”
- “I’m not available for emotional venting right now.”
- “That hurt me, and I need space.”

What they protect:

- Your emotional capacity
- Your empathy from turning into over-functioning
- Your ability to feel without being overwhelmed

👉 **Emotional boundaries are about:**
“I will not take on what is not mine.”



Mental Boundaries



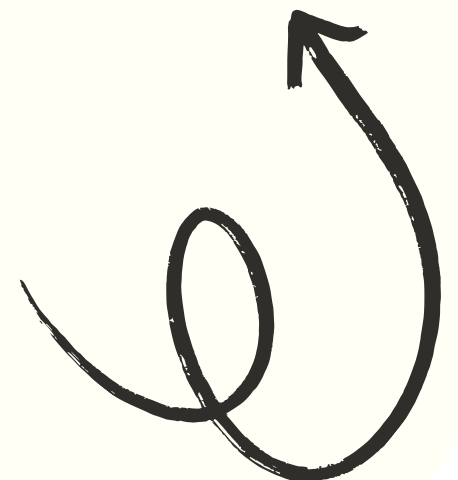
What they sound like:

- “I hear your opinion, but I think differently.”
- “That doesn’t align with my values.”
- “I need time to make my own decision.”

What they protect:

- Your ability to think clearly
- Your personal beliefs and identity
- Your autonomy in decisions

👉 **Mental boundaries are about:**
“I get to think for myself.”



Without Boundaries —

Resentment

Exhaustion

Reduced effectiveness



Balance Redefined



Balance = equal time



Balance = managed energy

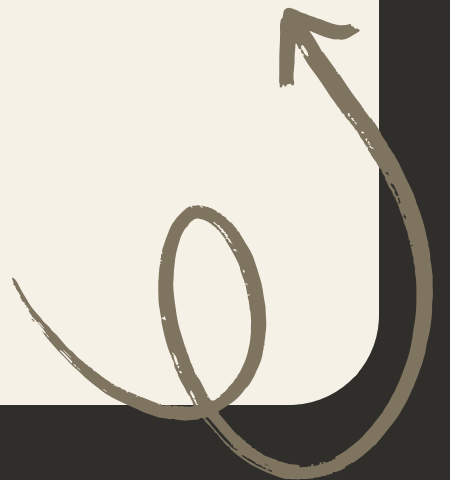


Sustainable Leadership

“You cannot pour from an empty system.”



Actionable Tools for Balance



Creating Sustainable Daily Routines

Establish **meaningful routines** that support your mental health and productivity.

Integrate practices like mindful breaks, prioritization, and time management to foster resilience and maintain balance in high-responsibility roles.



Tools for Balance

Strategies to Enhance Your Efficiency

Time Management

Effective **time management** allows individuals to prioritize tasks and allocate resources wisely, reducing feelings of overwhelm and enhancing productivity in high-responsibility roles.

Delegation

Delegation is essential in leadership; it empowers team members while relieving pressure on leaders, fostering trust and promoting a collaborative environment that enhances overall effectiveness.

Prioritization

The practice of **prioritization** helps to identify and focus on the most critical tasks, ensuring that energy and resources are directed where they are most impactful and needed.



Reflection

“What do I need to release today?”

What boundary do I need to set today?



This week I will:

- Set one boundary
- Use one tool
- Check in daily



You are allowed
to:

Rest

Reset

Be supported



Balance is not
found—

it is created.



Latifah



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Thank You



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